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NSC BRIEFING

15 July 1954

GENEVA CONFERENCE

- I. Communists are expected to offer Mendes-France an Indochina settlement by his 20 July deadline.
 - A. Communist proposals certainly will not be in accord with the US-UK seven conditions for respecting an Indochina settlement.
- II. A settlement is being explored this week in a variety of private talks *at GENEVA*:
 - A. The French delegation is meeting with the Soviet, Chinese Communist and Viet Minh delegations.
 - B. The Laotians and Cambodians have been meeting with the Viet Minh in military talks.
 - C. Vietnamese officials have scheduled meetings with all three Communist delegations.
- III. The Communist package emerging from these talks is expected to include a cease-fire, a partition of Vietnam and Laos, and an outline for a political settlement.
 - A. Ambiguities in the Communist proposals would tend to make it easier for the French to accept them.

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- B. Once accepted, the proposals would certainly require further negotiations with the French, Laotians and Cambodians.

IV. Communist proposals are expected to make the maximum claims on Vietnam, a lesser claim on Laos, the least on Cambodia.

- A. Partition of Vietnam at some point between 14th and 18th parallels, with general elections to follow.

- B. Communist control of some part of Laos, with the remainder of Laos neutralized and with an agreement on the first steps toward coalition government.

- C. Neutralization of Cambodia, with some form of recognition accorded the Communist "resistance movement" there.

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BASES, RESTRICTION
ON DEFENSIVE
CAPABILITIES

V. There are several possible combinations of proposals for a territorial division of Vietnam and Laos.

- A. The Communists are currently pressing for division of Vietnam at the 14th parallel, and a large slice of eastern Laos, whereas the French have proposed division of Vietnam near the 18th parallel and have indicated willingness to accept Communist control of a small part of Laos.

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- B. The Communists might accept the Dong Hoi line for Vietnam if they can get control of an area in southern Vietnam and a strip of Laos.
 - C. They might well settle for a partition of both Vietnam and Laos along the Dong Hoi-Thakhek line, the reported French defense line for the two states, which would give them control of the northern half of Indochina.
- VI. These proposals would violate the US-UK conditions for respecting a settlement in several respects.
- A. The integrity of Laos and Cambodia would not be preserved.
 - B. Restrictions would be imposed on the defensive capabilities of all three states.
 - C. Political agreements would risk the loss of two or perhaps all three of the states.
 - D. Effective machinery for international supervision of a truce would not have been established.
- VII. The vulnerability of France and the Associated States to these proposals is uncertain.

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- A. Although Mendes-France reportedly intends to take a hard line with the Communists this week, he has bid for American support in inducing the Vietnamese to accept a settlement.
- B. The Vietnamese may be trying to bypass the French and get the best possible terms for themselves.
- C. The Laotians are reportedly split on whether to recognize and negotiate with the Communist-sponsored "Pathet Lao" movement there.
- D. At last report the Cambodians were holding firm in resisting Viet Minh demands and were hoping for promises of American support.

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